

110TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. R. 5734

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to study and establish a motor vehicle safety standard that provides for a means of alerting blind and other pedestrians of motor vehicle operation.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 9, 2008

Mr. TOWNS (for himself and Mr. STEARNS) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

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## A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to study and establish a motor vehicle safety standard that provides for a means of alerting blind and other pedestrians of motor vehicle operation.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Pedestrian Safety En-  
5       hancement Act of 2008”.

6       **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7       As used in this Act—

1           (1) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary  
2 of Transportation; and

3           (2) the term “motor vehicle” has the meaning  
4 given such term in section 30102(a)(6) of title 49,  
5 United States Code.

6 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

8           (1) motor vehicles designed to provide the desir-  
9 able benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and op-  
10 erating with greater fuel efficiency include gasoline-  
11 electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles, and in the  
12 foreseeable future may include vehicles powered by  
13 hydrogen fuel cell and other engine designs that rely  
14 on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline-  
15 powered internal combustion engine;

16           (2) these vehicle engine designs operate or are  
17 likely to operate with virtually no sound being pro-  
18 duced by the vehicle;

19           (3) the total number of hybrid motor vehicles  
20 sold per year in the United States is growing dra-  
21 matically, and may someday equal or exceed the  
22 number of internal combustion engine motor vehicles  
23 on the Nation’s roads;

24           (4) blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate  
25 traffic by sight and instead must listen to traffic to

1 discern its speed, direction, and other attributes in  
2 order to travel safely and independently;

3 (5) other people, including pedestrians who are  
4 not blind, bicyclists, runners, and small children,  
5 benefit from multi-sensory information available  
6 from vehicle traffic, including the sound of vehicle  
7 engines;

8 (6) when operating on their electric engines, hy-  
9 brid vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and  
10 others, rendering such vehicles extremely dangerous  
11 when driving on the street, emerging from drive-  
12 ways, moving through parking lots, and in other sit-  
13 uations where pedestrians and vehicles come into  
14 proximity with each other;

15 (7) failure to take immediate action assuring  
16 that blind pedestrians can hear hybrid and other si-  
17 lent vehicles in all phases of their operation will in-  
18 evitably lead to pedestrian injuries and fatalities;  
19 and

20 (8) such accidents are preventable through vehi-  
21 cle designs which take into account the multi-sen-  
22 sory nature of traffic detection and avoidance, and  
23 require that vehicles emit a minimum level of sound  
24 designed to alert all pedestrians, especially blind pe-  
25 destrians, to the presence of such vehicles.

1 **SEC. 4. STUDY OF METHOD TO PROTECT BLIND AND**  
2 **OTHER PEDESTRIANS.**

3 (a) **REQUIRED STUDY.**—Not later than 90 days fol-  
4 lowing enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall conduct  
5 a study to—

6 (1) determine the most practical means of as-  
7 suring that blind and other pedestrians receive sub-  
8 stantially similar information to information such  
9 pedestrians receive from sound emitted by vehicles  
10 that use internal combustion engines;

11 (2) determine the minimum level of sound emit-  
12 ted from a motor vehicle that is necessary to provide  
13 blind pedestrians with the information needed to  
14 make safe travel judgments; and

15 (3) consider whether the minimum level of  
16 sound requirement or another method that conveys  
17 information essential for pedestrian safety provides  
18 the most reliable information to support safe travel  
19 of blind and other pedestrians, including—

20 (A) which method provides blind and other  
21 pedestrians the greatest amount of information  
22 regarding location, motion, speed, and direction  
23 of travel of a motor vehicle;

24 (B) the cost and feasibility of each method,  
25 including the cost and feasibility of equipping

1 each individual pedestrian with any technology  
2 necessary to receive information; and

3 (C) which method assures the least reli-  
4 ance by blind and other pedestrians upon tech-  
5 nology they must possess when traveling and  
6 thereby provides the greatest amount of inde-  
7 pendence and opportunity for spontaneous trav-  
8 el for these pedestrians.

9 (b) REQUIRED CONSULTATION.—When conducting  
10 the study, the Secretary shall—

11 (1) review all available research regarding the  
12 effect of traffic sounds on pedestrian safety, and  
13 commission such research as may be necessary;

14 (2) consult consumer groups representing indi-  
15 viduals who are blind, other pedestrians, cyclists,  
16 and advocates for children; and

17 (3) consult with automobile manufacturers and  
18 professional organizations representing them.

19 (c) REPORT.—The Secretary shall complete the study  
20 within 2 years of its commencement and shall transmit  
21 a report of the findings to Congress.

22 **SEC. 5. MINIMUM SOUND REQUIREMENT FOR MOTOR VEHI-**  
23 **CLES.**

24 Not later than 90 days after conclusion of the study  
25 required under section 4, the Secretary shall promulgate

1 a motor vehicle safety standard under section 30111 of  
2 title 49, United States Code, to establish a method for  
3 alerting blind and other pedestrians of the presence and  
4 operation of nearby motor vehicles to enable such pedes-  
5 trians to travel safely and independently in urban, rural,  
6 and residential environments. Such standard shall provide  
7 that every motor vehicle be equipped with a method—

8 (1) to provide blind and other pedestrians with  
9 a non-visual alert regarding the location, motion,  
10 speed, and direction of travel of a motor vehicle that  
11 provides substantially the same protection of such  
12 pedestrians as that provided by a motor vehicle with  
13 an internal combustion engine; and

14 (2) that will permit a blind or other pedestrian  
15 to determine the location, motion, speed, and direc-  
16 tion of travel of a motor vehicle with substantially  
17 the same degree of certainty as such pedestrians are  
18 able to determine the location, motion, speed, and  
19 direction of travel of a motor vehicle with an inter-  
20 nal combustion engine.

21 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

22 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-  
23 retary of Transportation such sums as may be necessary  
24 to carry out this Act.

1 **SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

2       The standard promulgated under section 5 shall  
3 apply to all new motor vehicles manufactured or sold in  
4 the United States beginning on that date that is 2 years  
5 after the issuance of such standard.

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